

ARIZONA STATE VETERINARY MEDICAL EXAMINING BOARD
1740 W. ADAMS ST., SUITE 4600, PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007
PHONE (602) 364-1PET (1738) FAX (602) 364-1039
VETBOARD.AZ.GOV

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION FORM

If there is an issue with more than one veterinarian please file a
separate Complaint Investigation Form for each veterinarian

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: Nov. 10, 2020 Case Number: 21-62

A. THIS COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING:

Name of Veterinarian/CVT: Adam Shure, VMD
Premise Name: Lookout Mountain Veterinary Clinic
Premise Address: 15440 N. 7th St., Suite 14
City: Phoenix State: AZ Zip Code: 85022
Telephone: (602) 993-1660

B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE INDIVIDUAL FILING COMPLAINT*:

Name: Diane Heller
Address: [REDACTED]
City: [REDACTED] State: [REDACTED] Zip Code: [REDACTED]
Home Telephone: [REDACTED] Cell Telephone: [REDACTED]

*STATE LAW REQUIRES WE HAVE TO DISCLOSE YOUR NAME UNLESS WE CAN SHOW THAT DISCLOSURE WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL HARM TO YOU, SOMEONE ELSE OR THE PUBLIC PER A.R.S. § 41-1010. IF YOU HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SUBSTANTIAL HARM WILL RESULT IN DISCLOSURE OF YOUR NAME PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES OF RESTRAINING ORDERS OR OTHER DOCUMENTATION.

C. PATIENT INFORMATION (1):

Name: Fluffy

Breed/Species: Maine Coon/Feline

Age: 5 years Sex: F Color: brown/tan/white

PATIENT INFORMATION (2):

Name: _____

Breed/Species: _____

Age: _____ Sex: _____ Color: _____

D. VETERINARIANS WHO HAVE PROVIDED CARE TO THIS PET FOR THIS ISSUE:

Please provide the name, address and phone number for each veterinarian.

Dr. Adam Shure

Lookout Mountain Veterinary Clinic, same address as above

E. WITNESS INFORMATION:

Please provide the name, address and phone number of each witness that has direct knowledge regarding this case.

None

Attestation of Person Requesting Investigation

By signing this form, I declare that the information contained herein is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Further, I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

F. ALLEGATIONS and/or CONCERNS:

Please provide all information that you feel is relevant to the complaint. This portion must be either typewritten or clearly printed in ink.

On 9/17/2020, I brought my cat, Fluffy, to Lookout Mountain Veterinary Clinic for evaluation of what appeared to be a sore mouth. Dr. Shure, a veterinarian at this practice, examined her and diagnosed her with cancer of the jaw. I decided to have her euthanized. One of the options provided with euthanasia is to have a paw print created as a memento of the pet. The paw print was included with the price of euthanasia, and it is a higher charge than euthanasia without a paw print, although the paw print is not specifically identified in the price of the euthanasia.

A week later after Fluffy's passing, I returned to the practice to retrieve the paw print. After removing it from the "gift bag" and examining it, I realized that it was not my cat's paw print. Fluffy was a Maine Coon and had huge paw pads. The paw print on this clay was small and, I believe, does not belong to any cat, but instead is made with a device which mimics a cat's paw pads and is imprinted into wet clay, then dried.

I compared it to another cat that belonged to me and was euthanized at Lookout Mountain. His name was Jet and he was a short-hair domestic breed, much smaller than Fluffy. The sizes of their paw prints were nearly identical. His was another artisan type of paw pad imprinted into clay.

I compared Fluffy's and Jet's paw prints with two other paw prints of deceased cats from a few years ago, provided at two different veterinary practices. This was how I determined that the Lookout Mountain paw prints were fake. The previous paw prints were imperfect, messy, and uneven, but they at least looked real.

When a veterinary practice offers to sell a client a paw print, we believe and we trust that that paw print belongs to our actual beloved animal. Lookout Mountain's are fake and a betrayal of the trust that indeed we have paid for.

I did call the practice a week later and spoke to Linda, a long-time employee and a credit to this practice, regarding my concern over this apparent sham. Linda stated that she would pass along my concern. I have yet to hear from Dr. Jeff Cook, the owner, or his representative.

If you would like to see pictures of all of these paw prints, I would be happy to send them.

This form is not accepting my signature and date in the above attestation block. This is my signature, attesting to the truth of the above encounter. I authorize the release of any and all medical records or information necessary to complete the investigation of this case.

Diane M. Heller 11/09/2020

Narrative Account:

On 9/17/2020 Ms. Heller presented with Fluffy, a male neutered DSH of unknown age (we had 5.5 years in the system, but Ms. Heller stated he was older, possibly much older). We performed a thorough physical exam and noted a large severe swelling rostral to right lateral mandible, also noted erythematous changes and swelling sublingual. After discussing next step options (as indicated in the exam notes) Ms. Heller opted to euthanize Fluffy. We discussed if she wanted to be present for the euthanasia and she stated she did. We discussed COVID-19 protocols. Ms. Heller did present in person later that day. All standard post euthanasia options were offered to Ms. Heller: 'Special' (ashes returned), 'regular' (ashes not returned), and whether she wanted a paw print. As indicated in the notes Ms. Heller opted for a regular cremation and a paw print. This was paid for prior to the euthanasia (I believe). After these options were decided upon, I euthanized Fluffy with Ms. Heller present.

As indicated in the notes, on 9/23/2020 Ms. Heller called to check in on the status on the pawprint. The staff stated it had not arrived, but we would call our service (Lasting Paws) to find out when it would be returned. On 9/24/2020 our staff called Ms. Heller to let her know the paw print did arrive. A message was left on cell mobile number. The paw print was picked up between the dates of 9/24 and 9/28.

As indicated in the exam notes Ms. Heller called on 9/28 with multiple concerns. As stated in the notes, her final concern was: "she believes the paw print is just a stamp because Fluffy's paws were much bigger". This note was supposedly sent to our office manager. Unfortunately, neither the office manager nor I received these concerns.

On 11/14/2020 I received the mailing regarding case 21-62. Upon reading the complaint the answer was plainly evident: Both Fluffy and Jet's paw prints were done professionally through our crematory service Lasting Paws. Both cats were close in size (Fluffy's last weight was 13.18# and Jet's was 14.6#) so the paw prints would likely appear almost identical. At LMVC we used to create in-house paw prints that were somewhat 'uneven and more homemade' but because of costs and time I had to discontinue this offering. I immediately called Ms. Heller and left a message apologizing that I never contacted her regarding her concerns and that was an egregious error on our part. I stated she could call me on my personal mobile number or call the clinic so I could explain the likely reason behind her concerns; furthermore, I stated if she did not want to discuss then we would go through these procedures with the Board.



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INVESTIGATIVE DIVISION REPORT

TO: Arizona State Veterinary Medical Examining Board

FROM: Investigative Division

RE: Case: 21-62

Complainant(s): Diane Heller

Respondent(s): Adam Schure, VMD (License: 3396)

SUMMARY:

Complaint Received at Board Office: 11/10/20:
Board Discussion: 1/20/21

APPLICABLE STATUTES AND RULES:

Laws as Amended August 2018
(Lime Green); Rules as Revised
September 2013 (Yellow).

On September 17, 2020, "Fluffy," a 5-year-old male Main Coon cat was presented to Respondent to have his mouth evaluated. Respondent suspected neoplasia and recommended diagnostics to confirm. Complainant declined and elected to humanely euthanize the cat. Complainant requested communal cremation and a clay paw print.

On September 24, 2020, the clay paw print was received from Lasting Paws Pet Memorial and Respondent's premises notified Complainant. Complainant picked up the clay paw and expressed concerns that the clay paw received was not an imprint of her cat's paw but of a device used to mimic a cat's paw.

Respondent explained that his premises does not make the clay paws, the pet crematory offers the memento to pet owners of the pet's they cremate.

PROPOSED 'FINDINGS of FACT':

1. On September 17, 2020, the cat was presented to Respondent for evaluation of the mouth. Respondent examined the cat and suspected neoplasia and offered diagnostics to confirm, including sedation, radiographs and a biopsy. Complainant declined and elected to humanely euthanize the cat. She also elected communal cremation but wanted a clay paw print of the cat's paw.
2. On September 23, 2020, Complainant called Respondent's premises to see if the paw print was available. Staff contacted the crematory service and was told that the paw print would be delivered the next day. Complainant was advised that it would be arriving the following day.
3. On September 24, 2020, the clay paw print was delivered to the premises and Complainant was notified of its arrival.
4. On September 28, 2020, Complainant called and spoke to staff regarding her dissatisfaction with the premises. She expressed concerns with the euthanasia process, the lack of communication from Respondent and that the clay paw print she received appeared to be a stamp and not an imprint of her cat's paw. Complainant had compared the other paw prints from previous cats and the two from Respondent's premises were identical causing her to believe they were not actual imprints of her cat's paw but a device used to mimic a cat paw print. Staff stated they would relay the information to the hospital manager.
5. On November 14, 2020, Respondent received the complaint. He contacted Complainant explaining that he did not receive the information that she had called to express concerns – he apologized and left his cell phone number so she could call to discuss further if she wished.
6. Respondent stated in his narrative that the paw prints are professionally done through their cremation service, Lasting Paws. He stated that Complainant's cats, Jet and Fluffy, were similar in size so the paw prints would likely appear identical. Respondent further stated that he used to create in-house paw prints but due to cost and time, he discontinued the service.

The information contained in this report was obtained from the case file, which includes the complaint, the respondent's response, any consulting veterinarian or witness input, and any other sources used to gather information for the investigation.

TR

Tracy A. Riendeau, CVT
Investigative Division